

MINUTES OF MEETING
Initial Organizational Meeting
Chicot Aquifer Stakeholders (CASH)
Clifton Chenier Community Center,
220 West Willow, Lafayette, Louisiana
July 28, 2004 7:00 p.m

1. The initial organizational meeting of the Chicot Aquifer Stakeholders (CASH) was held at 7:00 p.m., July 28, 2004, at the Clifton Chenier Community Center, 220 West Willow Street, Lafayette, Louisiana. Attendance sheets listing the approximately two dozen attendees were compiled at the door.
2. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Don Broussard, Manager of Water Operations for the Lafayette Utilities System. On the panel for discussion of water issues was Dr. Tim Duex, Professor of Geology with the University of Louisiana, Lafayette; Dr. Bruce Darling, a water quality consultant with LGB-Guyton and Associates; and, Brent Sonnier, an attorney practicing in the field of water rights law with the Onebane Law Firm.
3. The purpose of the meeting was to convene parties who by their business, professional and civic pursuits are interested stakeholders in the use and management and groundwater produced from the Chicot Aquifer in Southwest Louisiana to discuss organizing a Chicot Aquifer Stakeholders ("CASH") group to meet on a quarterly basis to discuss issues concerning the Chicot Aquifer. From these meetings, CASH would then make recommendations to the Louisiana Ground Water Resources Commission (GWRC) as to use, preservation, protection and management of the aquifer's ground water, and impacts on the various shareholders. It is proposed that a member of CASH would serve as liaison between CASH and the GWRC, and the Louisiana Ground Water Task Force advisory group, to present such recommendations. CASH would also work to secure public and private funding for various projects for studies of the aquifer and public education of same.
4. Mr. Broussard explained that CASH is not to serve as a micro-management group, a "subset" of the GWRC and Task Force, a formal governmental board at this point, nor a taxing authority or water policeman.
5. The panel members then made comments of the present issues concerning ground water management in general in Louisiana, and the evolution of the State's laws in that area. Current law allows the GWRC to organize up to five regional bodies based on geographic extent of the State's major aquifer systems (rather than on political division) to advise on issues affecting their respective systems.
6. Anthony Duplechin, the Director of the Water Resources Division in the Office of Conservation, Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, advised that the GWRC, acting through the Commissioner of Conservation, is currently considering adoption of rules that would create these regional bodies and set their scope of authority. He stated that the GWRC's goal is to adopt relatively equivalent rules to set a level playing field among the regional bodies formed.

7. State Representative Clara Baudoin, in attendance, gave brief comments as to the current legislative concerns for the protection and preservation of the States' groundwater to assure long term sustainability of the resource for the Louisiana citizenry, and the active role regional bodies such as CASH should play in achieving those objectives.

8. Dr. Tim Duex next presented an overview of the hydrological features of the Chicot Aquifer underlying the Lafayette Parish area, and the effects local historical ground water usage in Lafayette Parish have had on the aquifer. He noted that a present concern is the number of known hazardous waste sites in the parish that could pose a pollution risk to the aquifer, but also observed that no pollution has adversely affected the quality of the parish's public water supply.

9. Dr. Duex also stated his view of four initial primary considerations for CASH: (1) Adopt a statement of purpose that CASH will function as a support and advisory group to the GWRC; (2) Develop rules for membership, which GWRC appears to be currently engaged; (3) Formulate clear objectives as forum for discussing issues concerning the Chicot Aquifer and providing research, funding, public education and data gathering as to those issues; and (4) Developing appropriate issues for such discussion. Dr. Duex also recommended that CASH consider issuing an annual report on the state of the aquifer from the standpoint of water quality, drawdown, subsidence, pollution risks, sustainability, and other factors, such as the influence of surface water and recharge areas.

10. Dr. Darling presented an overview of water quality issues that typically are of concern to the public from his prior water management work in other states. He noted that public interest in water quality and supply issues tends to increase as droughts, shortages, and other problems develop. He emphasized that in dealing with the issues on a public level, the serious issues need to be defined with attention to separating fact from fiction to effectively address such problems in a group forum such as CASH.

11. At this point, several questions were fielded by the panel from the attendees:

- With regard to considerations of changing from ground water to alternatives such as surface water, Dr. Darling responded that the GWRC consultant's report leading up to the 2003 ground water management legislation set out a number of alternative strategies, based on preferences of regional user groups and feasibility of implementation.
- As to the reason that once high alternative use of surface water from the Toledo Bend reservoir has decreased, Dr. Darling advised that relatively quick rebound of the ground water levels in the Chicot Aquifer with that more expensive alternative use reduced the incentive to use the surface water. Dr. Darling further noted that several factors, including aquifer sustainability and economic growth, must be balanced through compromise among user groups, considering relevant facts and implications of various alternatives.
- As to potential funding sources for the various functions envisioned for CASH, Mr. Broussard noted that Lafayette Consolidated Government is only a temporary source in the group's organizational phase. Suggestions of other funding sources from the panel were alliances with governmental agencies such as the USGS, and UL.

- As to the need for a near-term organizational structure for CASH in lieu of an open group forum to serve its proposed functions, it was suggested that the rules currently under consideration for adoption by the GWRC would provide a structure and composition of the representative stakeholder constituents for the group from various user interests. The GWRC's rules require legislative approval, so some time lag can be expected prior to effective adoption. It was also suggested that some parishes in the Chicot Aquifer area may not have a substantial interest in participating in CASH because of limited water use issues in the parish. Dr. Darling observed that non-interested users typically develop the perception over time that participation in regional water use advisory groups is in the best interest of the user group.

12. As a final matter, the next meeting is set for August 26, 2004 at 6:00 p.m., in the same location at the Clifton Chenier Community Center.

[Minutes compiled by Brent Sonnier]